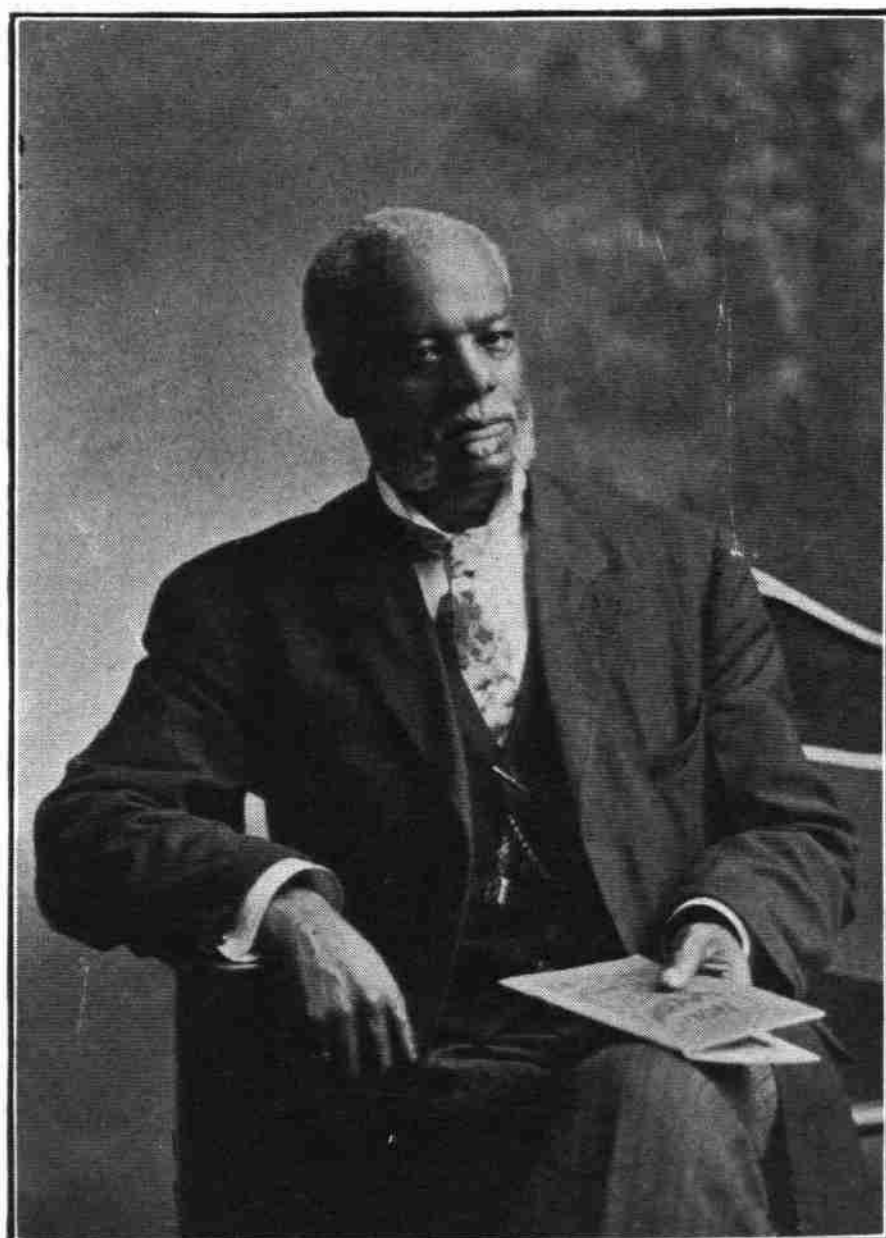


Wilberforce University Wilberforce, Ohio

Prof. W. S. Scarborough, President

THE first organized effort for the education of the colored race in this country was made in September, 1847, in a school for Negro youth, opened near Xenia, Ohio, and called "Union Seminary."

It was the first systematic plan of the race for its own education, and was the first special effort of any race for the mental



William S. Scarborough, A.M., LL.D., Ph.D.

uplift of the Negro, anticipating by nearly fifty years the present idea of industrial training, being conducted on the manual labor plan. This was the starting point of Wilberforce University. Its teachers were Negroes: Rev. John M. Brown, later Bishop Brown, its first principal, assisted by Mrs. Frances Harper, a Philadelphia woman well known in temperance circles.

Nine years later, in 1856, the white people, realizing the necessity of looking after the welfare of the 30,000 colored people of Ohio, took action through the Methodist Episcopal Church in a similar direction. "Tawawa Springs," a beautiful summer resort in southwestern Ohio, was purchased, and a school for the colored race was organized and named "Wilberforce University" in honor of England's great abolitionist, William Wilberforce.

Incorporated in August, 1856, its first board of twenty-four trustees included Gov. Salmon P. Chase, Dr. Richard S. Rust, of the Methodist Church, and four colored men. At the beginning the broad principle was adopted, "that there should never be

any distinction among the trustees, faculty, or students, on account of race, color, or creed." The school opened in October, 1856, under white teachers. Dr. Richard S. Rust left a prominent pastoral charge to become its first president. In later years he became secretary of the Freedman's Aid Society.

During the first epoch of its history, the school was patronized very largely by the children of southern planters. Often entire families were brought, lands were purchased, and homes established. This, with the fact there was also attracted to the place the best colored element from many points, led to the growth of a community of negroes exceptional in material possessions, in heredity and standing. Wilberforce University was strategically situated to serve the race, and commendable progress was made until the Civil War broke out, when Southern patronage ceased, the school was temporarily closed, and the trustees finally decided to sell the property.

Bishop Payne's Heroic Endeavors

Since 1856, Bishop D. A. Payne had been its patron and was ever an active helper in the actual management of the school. Exiled from his native city, Charleston, S. C., in 1835, because he was educating the colored youth, he was a zealous advocate of education for his people through the following years, and a special pleader for an educated ministry, he could not see the usefulness of Wilberforce University at an end. The state of Ohio desired the property, and Daniel A. Payne did not have a dollar. The trustees decided to give the race the offer of the property for \$10,000. Not twenty-four hours could be given for decision. "Without a ten-dollar bill at command," not knowing where he could obtain any help, Bishop Payne "threw himself on the strong arm of the Lord" and with sublime faith in the possibilities of earnest endeavor for such a cause solemnly pledged the African Methodist Episcopal Church to raise the required sum. Within forty-eight hours the first hundred dollars toward the purchase of the property was given by a colored woman, Mrs. James A. Shorter. At once Bishop Payne associated with himself Rev. James A. Shorter, later Bishop Shorter, and Prof. John G. Mitchell, an early negro graduate of Oberlin College, in the reorganization and reopening of the university. Bishop Payne became its president and its leading spirit for many years.

During all these years, "Union Seminary" had kept in existence. Now it was sold and merged into Wilberforce University.